Smooth Functioning of Telephone Exchange in Kupwara, Kashmir

3874 MIRZA ABDUL RASHID: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that in the Kupwara District of Kashmir Valley Telephone Exchange has not been functioning, in spite of the fact a sufficient spacious building has been provided by the State Government for its smooth-working;

(b) whether it is also a fact that telecommunication facility in this district is still lacking despite having the highest Apple Fruit grower including Sopore; and

(c) how much time it will take for ensuring smooth functioning of the Exchange in Kupwara ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR) : (a) No, Sir. Telephone Exchange in the Kupwara district of Kashmir Valley is functioning satisfactorily in Departmental Building.

(b) No, Sir. Presently five exchanges in Kupwara district and seven exchanges in Sopore are functioning.

(c) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

Profit of VSNL

3875 SHRI NANA DESHMUKH : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the net profits of Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd. fell down for the first quarter of April-June, 2001;

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor; and

(c) what steps are being taken by Government in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR) : (a) Yes, Sir. Profit After Tax (PAT) in the first quarter of April-June, 2001 was Rs. 365.5 crores compared to Rs. 382.9 crores in the first quarter of April-June, 2000.

(b) The main reasons for the lower net profit are as follows :

(i) The Total Accounting Rate (TAR) settled for international calls applicable during the year was lower by 27-28% as compared to the corresponding period of last year.

(ii) Substantial reduction in Internet, International Private Leased Circuits (IPLC) and Internet Service Providers (ISP) tariffs as compared to tariffs prevailing in the same period of last year.

(c) VSNL is expanding its Internet Service and planning to enter National Long Distance (NLD) service to generate additional revenues.

Working of T.E.C.

3876 SHRI R. S. GAVAI : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government propose to convert Telecom Engineer Centre into an Autonomous Information Communication and Entertainment Standards Institute of India to face the challenges of the post liberalisation era;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. R. A. Mashelkar has been constituted to review working of T.E.C.;

(d) if so, the recommendations made by the Committee; and

(e) what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

(c) to (e) Yes, Sir. The report of the above Committee has just been received on 23rd of August, 2001 (in the evening). The above report is under examination by the Government.

Payment of Telephone Bills at Syndicate Bank, Ghaziabad

†3877. SHRI GANDHI AZAD : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that some branches of Syndicate Bank were authorised to accept payments of all types of telephone bills for the convenience of customers by the BSNL in Ghaziabad;

(b) whether this facility has now been withdrawn;

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.